

JANUARY 5 ADDRESS BY SAN DIEGO CITY COUNCIL PRESIDENT SCOTT PETERS

San Diego is at the dawn of a new era. When voters approved the strong mayor/strong council form of government in 2004, they sent a message to city hall. They told us they wanted a government that is responsive, accessible and transparent. They told us they wanted strong leaders with integrity and a clear vision of what this city needs to turn itself around. I am honored to serve as San Diego's first City Council President, and to help define and articulate that vision.

We live in the greatest city in America. But our great city has not lived up to its potential. We have been dragged down by mismanagement, secrecy and the politics of personal destruction. We have faced unprecedented challenges that require strong and focused leadership.

I know this next year will have its rough patches. We're still waiting to receive those audits that are so crucial to restoring the city's fiscal health. We have ongoing investigations that have undermined the confidence of taxpayers in their city leaders. And we face budget cuts that will force city servants to be more resourceful than ever.

But 2006 is the year San Diego will turn the corner. This is the year we'll get past the lawyering and the finger-pointing, and refocus our energy on the people's business.

Together with my Council colleagues, the Mayor, and the hardworking employees of this city, we'll focus on improving and restoring the quality of life that drew so many of us to San Diego in the first place.

- We'll protect our families and children, supporting our police, firefighters and lifeguards; ensuring disaster preparedness; and fighting for our share of Homeland Security dollars.

- We'll improve our nation's second largest urban park system, where we go to relax and have fun. we'll continue our progress on clean beaches and bays, and we'll define and build a network of trails for bikers, walkers and horseback riders.
- We'll produce the city's General Plan, which will define our transportation, parkland and housing into the future, and will guide how our city and our neighborhoods will feel and work.
- We'll develop a funding plan for fixing the streets and sidewalks that have gone neglected for decades.
- We'll give new attention to serving the older communities, forming the heart of our great city, that too often are underserved.
- And to make all of this work, we'll make our city government more transparent, and easier to navigate for its citizens.

I'm not saying any of this will be a walk in the park. But as president of this Council, I have hope and confidence. Together with Mayor Jerry Sanders, our City Attorney, my council colleagues, and every resident in this city, we can create a brighter future for our region. We can put aside petty disagreements and past history. We can restore our fiscal integrity. And together, we will make this city as great as all of us know it can be.